

E
717
.53
1899

AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

THE CONVOCATION ADDRESS DELIVERED ON THE
OCCASION OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CONVO-
CATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

BY

THE HON CARL SCHURZ,

JANUARY 4, 1899.

AMERICAN IMPERIALISM.

*The Convocation Address, delivered on the occasion of
the Twenty-seventh Convocation of the University
of Chicago, January 4, 1899.*

BY THE HON. CARL SCHURZ.

BY inviting me to address its faculty, its students, and its friends upon so distinguished an occasion, the University of Chicago has done me an honor for which I am profoundly grateful. I can prove that gratitude in no better way than by uttering with entire frankness my honest convictions on the great subject you have given me to discuss—a subject fraught with more momentous consequence than any ever submitted to the judgment of the American people since the foundation of our constitutional government.

It is proposed to embark this republic in a course of imperialistic policy by permanently annexing to it certain islands taken, or partly taken, from Spain in the late war. The matter is near its decision, but not yet decided. The peace treaty made at Paris is not yet ratified by the Senate; but even if it were, the question whether those islands, although ceded by Spain, shall be permanently incorporated in the territory of the United States would still be open for final determination by Congress. As an open question therefore I shall discuss it.

If ever, it behooves the American people to think and act with calm deliberation, for the character and future of the republic and the welfare of its people now living and yet to be born are in unprecedented jeopardy. To from a candid judgment of what this republic has been,

what it may become, and what it ought to be, let us first recall to our minds its condition before the recent Spanish War.

Our government was, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "the government of the people, by the people, and for the people." It was the noblest ambition of all true Americans to carry this democratic government to the highest degree of perfection and justice, in probity, in assured peace, in the security of human rights, in progressive civilization; to solve the problem of popular self-government on the grandest scale, and thus to make this republic the example and guiding star of mankind.

We had invited the oppressed of all nations to find shelter here, and to enjoy with us the blessings of free institutions. They came by the millions. Some were not so welcome as others, but under the assimilating force of American life in our temperate climate, which stimulates the working energies, nurses the spirit of orderly freedom, and thus favors the growth of democracies, they became good Americans, most in the first, all in the following generations. And so with all the blood-crossings caused by the motley immigration, we became a substantially homogeneous people, united by common political beliefs and ideals, by common interests, laws, and aspirations—in one word, a nation. Indeed, we were not without our difficulties and embarrassments, but only one of them, the race antagonism between the negroes and the whites, especially where the negroes live in mass, presents a problem which so far has baffled all efforts at practical solution in harmony with the spirit of our free institutions, and thus threatens complications of a grave character.

We gloried in the marvellous growth of our population, wealth, power, and civilization, and in the incalculable richness of the resources of our country, capable of harboring three times our present population, and of immeasurable further material development. Our commerce with the world abroad, although we had no colonies, and but a small navy, spread with unprece-

7

dented rapidly, capturing one foreign market after another, not only for the products of our farms, but also for many of those of our manufacturing industries, with prospect of indefinite extension.

Peace reigned within our borders, and there was not the faintest shadow of danger of foreign attack. Our voice, whenever we chose to speak in the councils of nations, was listened to with respect, even the mightiest sea-power on occasion yielding to us a deference far beyond its habit in its intercourse with others. We were considered ultimately invincible, if not invulnerable, in our continental stronghold. It was our boast, not that we possessed great and costly armies and navies, but that we did not need any. This exceptional blessing was our pride, as it was the envy of the world. We looked down with pitying sympathy on other nations which submissively groaned under the burden of constantly increasing armaments, and we praised our good fortune for having saved us from so wretched a fate.

Such was our condition, such our beliefs and ideals, such our ambition and our pride, but a short year ago. Had the famous peace message of the Czar of Russia, with its protest against growing militarism and its plea for disarmament, reached us then, it would have been hailed with enthusiasm by every American as a triumph of our example. We might have claimed only that to our republic, and not to the Russian monarch, belonged the place of leadership in so great an onward step in the progress of civilization.

Then came the Spanish War. A few vigorous blows laid the feeble enemy helpless at our feet. The whole scene seemed to have suddenly changed. According to the solemn proclamation of our government, the war had been undertaken solely for the liberation of Cuba, as a war of humanity and not of conquest. But our easy victories had put conquest within our reach, and when our arms occupied foreign territory, a loud demand arose that, pledge or no pledge to the contrary, the conquests should be kept, even the Philippines on

the other side of the globe, and that as to Cuba herself, independence would only be a provisional formality. Why not? was the cry. Has not the career of the republic almost from its very beginning been one of territorial expansion? Has it not acquired Louisiana, Florida, Texas, the vast countries that came to us through the Mexican War, and Alaska, and has it not digested them well? Were not those acquisitions much larger than those now in contemplation? If the republic could digest the old, why not the new? What is the difference?

Only look with an unclouded eye, and you will soon discover differences enough warning you to beware. There are five of decisive importance.

1. All the former acquisitions were on this continent, and, excepting Alaska, contiguous to our borders.

2. They were situated, not in the tropical, but in the temperate zone, where democratic institutions thrive, and where our people could migrate in mass.

3. They were but very thinly peopled—in fact, without any population that would have been in the way of new settlement.

4. They could be organized as territories in the usual manner, with the expectation that they would presently come into the Union as self-governing states with populations substantially homogeneous to our own.

5. They did not require a material increase of our army or navy, either for their subjection to our rule or for their defense against any probable foreign attack provoked by their being in our possession.

Acquisitions of that nature we might, since the slavery trouble has been allayed, make indefinitely without in any dangerous degree imperiling our great experiment of democratic institutions on the grandest scale; without putting the peace of the republic in jeopardy, and without depriving us of the inestimable privilege of comparative unarmed security on a compact continent which may, indeed, by an enterprising enemy, be scratched on our edges, but is with a people like ours, virtually impregnable. Even of our far away Alaska it

can be said that, although at present a possession of doubtful value, it is at least mainly on this continent and may at some future time, when the inhabitants of the British possessions happily wish to unite with us, be within our uninterrupted boundaries.

Compare now with our old acquisitions as to all these important points those at present in view.

They are not continental, not contiguous to our present domain, but beyond seas, the Philippines many thousand miles distant from our coast. They are all situated in the tropics, where people of the northern races, such as Anglo-Saxons, or, generally speaking, people of Germanic blood, have never migrated in mass to stay; and they are more or less densely populated, parts of them as densely as Massachusetts—their populations consisting almost exclusively of races to whom the tropical climate is congenial—Spanish creoles mixed with negroes in the West Indies, and Malays, Tagals, Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, Negritos, and various more or less barbarous tribes in the Philippines.

When the question is asked whether we may hope to adapt those countries and populations to our system of government, the advocates of annexation answer cheerily, that when they belong to us, we shall soon “Americanize” them. This may mean that Americans in sufficiently large numbers will migrate there to determine the character of those populations so as to assimilate them to our own.

This is a delusion of the first magnitude. We shall, indeed, be able, if we go honestly about it, to accomplish several salutary things in those countries. But one thing we cannot do. We cannot strip the tropical climate of those qualities which have at all times deterred men of the northern races, to which we belong, from migrating to such countries in mass, and to make their homes there, as they have migrated and are still migrating to countries in the temperate zone. This is not a mere theory, but a fact of universal experience.

It is true, you will find in tropical regions a sprinkling of persons of Anglo-Saxon or other northern ori-

gin—merchants, railroad builders, speculators, professional men, miners, and mechanics, also here and there an agriculturist. But their number is small, and most of them expect to go home again as soon as their money-making purpose is more or less accomplished.

Thus we observe now that business men with plenty of means are casting their eyes upon our "new possessions" to establish mercantile houses there, or manufacturing to be worked with native labor; and moneyed syndicates and "improvement companies" to exploit the resources of those countries, and speculators and promoters to take advantage of what may turn up—the franchise grabber, as reported, is already there—many having perfectly legitimate ends in view, others ends not so legitimate, and all expecting to be more or less favored by the power of our government; in short, *the capitalist* is thinking of going there, or to send his agents, his enterprises in most cases to be directed from these more congenial shores. But you will find that laboring men of the northern races, as they have never done so before, will not now go there in mass to do the work of the country, agricultural or industrial, and to found there permanent homes; and this is not merely because the rate of wages in such countries is, owing to native competition, usually low, but because they cannot thrive there under the climatic conditions.

But it is the working-masses, those laboring in agriculture and the industries, that everywhere form the bulk of the population; and they are the true constituency of democratic government. And as the northern races cannot do the work of the tropical zone, they cannot furnish such constituencies. It is an incontestable and very significant fact that the British, the best colonizers in history, have, indeed, established in tropical regions governments and rather absolute ones, but they have never succeeded in establishing there democratic commonwealths of the Anglo-Saxon type, like those in America or Australia.

The scheme of Americanizing our "new possessions" in that sense is therefore absolutely hopeless.

The immutable forces of nature are against it. Whatever we may do for their improvement, the people of the Spanish Antilles will remain in overwhelming numerical predominance, Spanish creoles and negroes, and the people of the Philippines, Filipinos, Malays, Tagals, and so on—some of them quite clever in their way, but the vast majority utterly alien to us, not only in origin and language, but in habits, traditions, ways of thinking, principles, ambitions—in short, in most things that are of the greatest importance in human intercourse and especially in political cooperation. And under the influences of their tropical climate they will prove incapable of becoming assimilated to the Anglo-Saxon. They would, therefore, remain in the population of this republic a hopelessly heterogeneous element—in some respects more hopeless even than the colored people now living among us.

What, then, shall we do with such populations? Shall we, according, not indeed to the letter, but to the evident spirit of our constitution, organize those countries as territories with a view to their eventual admission as states? If they become states on an equal footing with the other states they will not only be permitted to govern themselves as to their home concerns, but they will take part in governing the whole republic, in governing us, by sending senators and representatives into our Congress to help make our laws, and by voting for president and vice-president to give our national government its executive. The prospect of the consequences which would follow the admission of the Spanish creoles and the negroes of West India islands and of the Malays and Tagals of the Philippines to participation in the conduct of our government is so alarming that you instinctively pause before taking the step.

But this may be avoided, it is said, by governing the new possessions as mere dependencies, or subject provinces. I will waive the constitutional question and merely point out that this would be a most serious departure from the rule that governed our former acquis-

itions, which are so frequently quoted as precedents. It is useless to speak of the District of Columbia and Alaska as proof that we have done such things before and can do them again. Every candid mind will at once admit the vast difference between those cases and the *permanent* establishment of substantially arbitrary government over large territories with many millions of inhabitants, and with a prospect of there being many more of the same kind, if we once launch out on a career of conquest. The question is not merely whether we *can* do such things, but whether, having the public good at heart, we *should* do them.

If we do adopt such a system, then we shall, for the first time since the abolition of slavery, again have two kinds of Americans: Americans of the first class, who enjoy the privilege of taking part in the government in accordance with our old constitutional principles, and Americans of the second class, who are to be ruled in a substantially arbitrary fashion by the Americans of the first class, through congressional legislation and the action of the national executive—not to speak of individual “masters” arrogating to themselves powers beyond the law,

This will be a difference no better—nay, rather somewhat worse—than that which a century and a quarter ago still existed between Englishmen of the first and Englishmen of the second class, the first represented by King George and the British Parliament, and the second by the American colonists. This difference called forth that great pæan of human liberty, the American Declaration of Independence—a document which, I regret to say, seems, owing to the intoxication of conquest, to have lost much of its charm among some of our fellow citizens. Its fundamental principle was that “governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.” We are now told that we have never fully lived up to that principle, and that, therefore, in our new policy we may cast it aside altogether. But I say to you that, if we are true believers in democratic government, it is our duty to

move in the direction towards the full realization of that principle and not in the direction away from it. If you tell me that we cannot govern the people of those new possessions in accordance with that principle, then I answer that this is a good reason why this democracy should not attempt to govern them at all.

If we do, we shall transform the government of the people, for the people, and by the people, for which Abraham Lincoln lived, into a government of one part of the people, the strong, over another part, the weak. Such an abandonment of a fundamental principle as a permanent policy may at first seem to bear only upon more or less distant dependencies, but it can hardly fail in its ultimate effects to disturb the rule of the same principle in the conduct of democratic government at home. And I warn the American people that a democracy cannot so deny its faith as to the vital conditions of its being—it cannot long play the king over subject populations without creating within itself ways of thinking and habits of action most dangerous to its own vitality—most dangerous especially to those classes of society which are the least powerful in the assertion, and the most helpless in the defense of their rights. Let the poor and the men who earn their bread by the labor of their hands pause and consider well before they give their assent to a policy so deliberately forgetful of the equality of rights.

I do not mean to say, however, that all of our new acquisitions would be ruled as subject provinces. Some of them, the Philippines, would probably remain such, but some others would doubtless become states. In Porto Rico, for instance, politicians of lively ambition are already clamoring for the speedy organization of that island as a regular territory, soon to be admitted as a state of the Union. You may say that they will have long to wait. Be not so sure of that. Consult your own experience. Has not more than one territory, hardly fitted for statehood, been precipitated into the Union as a state when the majority party in Congress thought that, by doing so, its party strength could be

augmented in the senate and in the house and in the electoral college? Have our parties become so unselfishly virtuous that this may not happen again? So we may see Porto Rico admitted before we have had time to rub our eyes.

You may say that little Porto Rico would not matter much. But can any clear thinking man believe that, when we are once fairly started in the course of indiscriminate expansion, we shall stop there? Will not the same reasons which induced us to take Porto Rico also be used to show that the two islands of San Domingo with Hayti, and of Cuba, which separate Porto Rico from our coast, would, if they were in foreign hands, be a danger to us, and that we *must* take them? Nothing could be more plausible. Why, the necessity of annexing San Domingo is already freely discussed, and agencies to bring this about are actually at work. And as to Cuba, every expansionist will tell you that it is only a matter of time. And does any one believe that those islands, if annexed, will not become states of this Union? That would give us at least three, perhaps four, new states, with about 3,500,000 inhabitants, Spanish and French Creoles and negroes, with six or eight senators, and from fifteen to twenty representatives in Congress and a corresponding number of votes in the electoral college.

Nor are we likely to stop there. If we build and own the Nicaragua Canal, instead of neutralizing it, we shall easily persuade ourselves that our control of that canal will not be safe unless we own all the country down to it, so that it be not separated from our borders by any foreign, and possibly hostile power. Is this too adventurous an idea to become true? Why, it is not half as adventurous and extravagant as the idea of uniting to this republic the Philippines, 9,000 miles away. It is already proposed to acquire in some way strips of territory several miles wide on each side of that canal for its military protection. But that will certainly be found insufficient if foreign countries lie between. We must, therefore, have those countries. That means

Mexico and various small Central American republics, with a population in all of about 14,000,000, mostly Spanish-Indian mixture—making at least fifteen states, entitled to thirty senators and scores of representatives and presidential electors.

As to the character of the people whom those senators, members, and presidential electors are to represent, I will let an authority speak that may astonish you, considering his present position—the Hon. Whitelaw Reid, who said in a public address at the time when the annexation of San Domingo was under discussion :

“ This land greed of the Anglo-Saxon race is still at work. We have absorbed the best part of Mexico, but we have plenty of propagandists, mainly in the army, and with influential voice near the head of the government, clamorous for the rest. We have taken a foothold in the West Indies ; it will be of God’s mercy if we do not find the whole West Indian archipelago crowded upon us to tax an already overloaded digestion. What are we to do with the turbulent, treacherous, ill-conditioned population? They have shown no faculty for self-government hitherto ; and are we to precipitate them in a mass into the already sufficiently-degraded elements of our national suffrage? We are trying the powers of Anglo-Saxon self-governing digestion upon three millions of slaves ; are the gastric juices of the body politic equal to the addition of the Mexicans, the Santo Domingans, the Cubans, the ‘ Conks ’ of the Bahamas, the Kanakas, and the rest of the inferior mixed races of our outlying tropical and semi-tropical dependencies? ”

As Mr. Reid now advocates the annexation of Porto Rico and the Philippines, he must have changed his opinion, which he had a right to do. But I think he substantially spoke the truth then, and if he now wants the Philippines, his case clearly illustrates how far people will be carried by the expansion fever when it once fairly takes hold of them.

You may think that the introduction of more than thirty men in our senate, over eighty in the lower

house of our Congress, and much over one hundred votes in our electoral college, to speak and act for the mixture of Spanish, French, and negro blood on the West India Islands, and for the Spanish and Indian mixture on the continent south of us—for people utterly alien and mostly incapable of assimilation to us in their tropical habitation—to make our laws and elect our presidents, and incidentally to help us lift up the Philippines to a higher plane of civilization—is too shocking a proposition to be entertained for a moment, and that our people will resist it to the bitter end. No, they will not resist it, if indiscriminate expansion has once become the settled policy of the republic. They will be told, as they are told now, that we are in it and cannot get honorably out of it; that destiny, and Providence, and duty demand it; that it would be cowardly to shrink from our new responsibilities; that those populations cannot take care of themselves, and that it is our mission to let them have the blessing of our free institutions; that we must have new markets for our products; that those countries are rich in resources, and that there is plenty of money to be made by taking them; that the American people can whip anybody and do anything they set out to do; and that “Old Glory” should float over every land on which we can lay our hands.

Those who have yielded to such cries once, will yield to them again. Conservative citizens will tell them that thus the homogeneity of the people of the republic, so essential to the working of our democratic institutions, will be irretrievably lost; that our race troubles, already dangerous, will be infinitely aggravated, and that the government of, by, and for the people will be in imminent danger of fatal demoralization. They will be cried down as pusillanimous pessimists, who are no longer American patriots. The American people will be driven on and on by the force of events as Napoleon was when started on his career of limitless conquest. This is imperialism as now advocated. Do we wish to prevent its excesses? Then we

must stop at the beginning, before taking Porto Rico. If we take that island, not even to speak of the Philippines, we shall have placed ourselves on the inclined plane, and roll on and on, no longer masters of our own will, until we have reached bottom. And where will that bottom be? Who knows?

Our old acquisitions did not require a material increase of our army and navy. What of the new? It is generally admitted that we need very considerable additions to our armaments on land and sea to restore and keep order on the islands taken from Spain, and then to establish our sovereignty there. This is a ticklish business. In the first place, Spain has never been in actual control and possession of a good many of the Philippine islands, while on others the insurgent Filipinos had well-nigh destroyed the Spanish power when the treaty of Paris was made. The people of those islands will either peaceably submit to our rule or they will not. If they do not, and we must conquer them by force of arms, we shall at once have war on our hands.

What kind of a war will that be? The Filipinos fought against Spain for their freedom and independence, and unless they abandon their recently proclaimed purpose, it is for their freedom and independence, that they will fight against us. To be sure, we promise them all sorts of good things if they will consent to become our subjects. But they may, and probably will prefer independence to foreign rule, no matter what fair promises the foreign invader makes. For to the Filipinos the American is essentially a foreigner, more foreign in some respects than even the Spaniard was. Now, if they resist, what shall we do? Kill them? Let soldiers marching under the stars and stripes shoot them down? Shoot them down because they stand up for their independence, just as the Cubans, who are no better than they, fought for their independence, to which we solemnly declared them to be "of right" entitled? Look at this calmly if you can.

The American volunteers, who rushed to arms by the hundreds of thousands to fight for Cuban independence, may not stomach this killing of Filipinos fighting for *their* independence. We shall have to rely upon the regulars, the professional soldiers, and we may need a good many of them. As to the best way to fill the ranks in the Philippines, General Merritt is reported to have spoken in a recent interview published in the New York papers as follows :

“To my mind the permanent force should consist of from 20,000 to 30,000 men. Of these 15,000 should be American soldiers. The remainder of the troops might be recruited from the Spaniards and Filipinos. The latter have exhibited no desire to enlist thus far, but there are many Spaniards there who have expressed a wish to wear the blue. They were impressed with the good pay and treatment of our men, and I think they would make good American soldiers. They are brave and hardy, but have suffered for lack of discipline.”

Of course, General Merritt spoke only as the professional soldier, who has to take care of the army, and I do not blame him. But the idea of engaging the same Spaniards, who but recently fought us and the Filipinos at the same time, to do the killing of the same Filipinos for us, or at least to terrorize them into subjection, because we want to possess their land, and to do this under the stars and stripes—this idea is at first sight a little startling. It may make the Hessians of our Revolutionary War grin in their graves. If anybody had predicted such a possibility a year ago, every patriotic American would have felt an impulse to kick him downstairs. However, this is imperialism. It bids us not to be squeamish. Indeed, some of our fellow-citizens seem already to be full of its spirit. The Hon. Cyrus A. Sulloway, a member of Congress from New Hampshire, is reported to have said in a recent interview : “The Anglo-Saxon advances into the new regions with a Bible in one hand and a shotgun in the other. The inhabitants of those regions that he cannot

convert with the aid of the Bible and bring into his markets, he gets rid of with the shotgun. It is but another demonstration of the survival of the fittest." In other words, unless you worship as we command you, and give us a profitable trade, we shall have to shoot you down. The bloodiest of the old Spanish conquerors, four centuries ago, could not have spoken better. It has a strange sound in free America. Let us hope that the spread of this hideous brutality of sentiment will prove only a temporary epidemic, like the influenza, and will yield again when the intoxication of victory subsides and our heads become cool once more. If it does not, more shotguns will be needed than Mr. Soloway may now anticipate.

If we take those new regions, we shall be well entangled in that contest for territorial aggrandizement, which distracts other nations and drives them far beyond their original design. So it will be inevitably with us. We shall want new conquests to protect that which we already possess. The greed of speculators working upon our government, will push us from one point to another, and we shall have new conflicts on our hands, almost without knowing how we got into them. It has always been so under such circumstances, and always will be. This means more and more soldiers, ships, and guns.

A singular delusion has taken hold of the minds of otherwise clear-headed men. It is that our new friendship with England will serve firmly to secure the world's peace. Nobody can hail that friendly feeling between the two nations more warmly than I do, and I fervidly hope it will last. But I am profoundly convinced that if this friendship results in the two countries setting out to grasp "for the Anglo-Saxon," as the phrase is, whatever of the earth may be attainable—if they hunt in couple—they will surely soon fall out about the game, and the first serious quarrel, or at least one of the first, we shall have, will be with Great Britain. And as family feuds are the bitterest, that

feud will be apt to become one of the most deplorable in its consequences.

No nation is, or ought to be, unselfish. England, in her friendly feeling toward us, is not inspired by mere sentimental benevolence. The anxious wish of many Englishmen that we should take the Philippines is not free from the consideration that, if we do so, we shall for a long time depend on British friendship to maintain our position on that field of rivalry, and that Britain will derive ample profit from our dependence on her. This was recently set forth with startling candor by the London *Saturday Review*, thus :

“Let us be frank and say outright that we expect mutual gain in material interests from this *rapprochement*. The American Commissioners at Paris are making this bargain, whether they realize it or not, under the protecting naval strength of England, and we shall expect a material *quid pro quo* for this assistance. We expect the United States to deal generously with Canada in the matter of tariffs, and we expect to be remembered when the United States comes into possession of the Philippine Islands, and, above all, we expect her assistance on the day, which is quickly approaching, when the future of China comes up for settlement, for the young imperialist has entered upon a path where it will require a strong friend, and a lasting friendship between the two nations can be secured, not by frothy sentimentality on public platforms, but by reciprocal advantages in solid, material interests.”

And the cable dispatch from London bringing this utterance added :

“The foregoing opinion is certainly outspoken enough, but every American moving in business circles here knows this voices the expectations of the average Englishman.”

This is plain. If Englishmen think so we have no fault to find with them. But it would be extremely foolish on our part to close our eyes to the fact. British friendship is a good thing to have, but, perhaps, not so

good a thing to need. If we are wise we shall not put ourselves in a situation in which we shall need it. British statesmanship has sometimes shown great skill in making other nations fight its battles. This is very admirable from its point of view, but it is not so pleasant for the nations so used. I should be loath to see this republic associated with Great Britain in apparently joint concerns as junior partner with a minority interest, or the American navy in the situation of a mere squadron of the British fleet. This would surely lead to trouble in the settling of accounts. Lord Salisbury was decidedly right when, at the last lord mayor's banquet, he said that the appearance of the United States as a factor in Asiatic affairs was likely to conduce to the interest of Great Britain, but might "not conduce to the interest of peace." Whether he had eventual quarrels with this republic in mind, I do not know. But it is certain that the expression of British sentiment I have just quoted shows us a Pandora box of such quarrels.

Ardently desiring the maintenance of the friendship between England and this republic, I cannot but express the profound belief that this friendship will remain most secure if the two nations do not attempt to accomplish the same ends in the same way and on the same field, but continue to follow the separate courses prescribed by their peculiar conditions and their history.

The history of England is that of a small island, inhabited by a vigorous, energetic and rapidly multiplying race, with the sea for its given field of action. Nothing could be more natural than that, as the population pressed against its narrow boundaries, Englishmen should have swarmed out, founding colonies and gradually building up an empire of possessions scattered all over the globe. England now *must* have the most powerful fleet in the world, not only for the protection of her distant possessions, but because if any other sea power, or combination of sea powers, could effectually blockade her coasts, her people as they now are, might be starved in a few months. England must

be the greatest sea power in order to be a great power at all.

The American people began their career as one of the colonial offshoots of the English stock. They found a great continent to occupy and to fill with democratic commonwealths. Our country is large enough for several times our present population. Our home resources are enormous, in great part not yet touched. We need not fear to be starved by the completest blockade of our coasts, for we have enough of everything and to spare. On the contrary such a blockade might rather result in starving others that need our products. We are to-day one of the greatest powers on earth, without having the most powerful fleet, and without stepping beyond our continent. We are sure to be by far the greatest power of all, as our homogeneous, intelligent, and patriotic population multiplies, and our resources are developed, without firing a gun or sacrificing a life for the sake of conquest—far more powerful than the British Empire with all its Hindoos, and than the Russian Empire with all its Mongols. We can exercise the most beneficent influences upon mankind, not by forcing our rule or our goods upon others that are weak at the point of the bayonet, but through the moral power of our example, in proving how the greatest as well as the smallest nation can carry on the government of the people, by the people, and for the people in justice, liberty, order, and peace without large armies and navies.

Let this republic and Great Britain each follow the course which its conditions and its history have assigned to it, and their ambitions will not clash, and their friendships can be maintained for the good of all. And if our British cousins should ever get into serious stress, American friendship may stand behind them ; but then Britain would depend on our friendship, which, as an American, I should prefer, and not America on British friendship, as our British friends who so impatiently urge us to take the Philippines, would have it. But if we do take the Philippines, and thus entangle ourselves

in the rivalries of Asiatic affairs, the future will be, as Lord Salisbury predicted, one of wars and rumors of wars, and the time will be forever past when we could look down with condescending pity on the nations of the old world groaning under militarism with all its burdens.

We are already told that we shall need a regular army of at least 100,000 men, three-fourths of whom are to serve in our "new possessions." The question is whether this necessity is only to be temporary or permanent. Look at the cost. Last year the support of the army proper required about \$23,000,000. It is computed that, taking the increased costliness of the service in the tropics into account, the army under the new dispensation will require about \$150,000,000; that is, \$127,000,000 a year more. It is also officially admitted that the possession of the Philippines would render indispensable a much larger increase of the navy than would otherwise be necessary, costing untold millions for the building and equipment of ships, and untold millions every year for their maintenance and for the increased number of officers and men. What we shall have to spend for fortifications and the like cannot now be computed. But there is a burden upon us which in like weight no other nation has to bear. To-day, thirty-three years after the Civil War, we have a pension roll of very nearly one million names. And still they come. We paid to pensioners over \$145,000,000 last year, a sum larger than the annual cost of the whole military peace establishment of the German Empire, including its pension roll. Our recent Spanish War will, according to a moderate estimate, add at least \$20,000,000 to our annual pension payments. But if we send troops to the tropics and keep them there, we must look for a steady stream of pensioners from that quarter, for in the tropics soldiers are "used up" very fast, even if they have no campaigning to do.

But all such estimates are futile. There may, and probably will be, much campaigning to do to keep our new subjects in obedience, or even in conflicts with

other powers. And what military and naval expeditions will then cost, with our extravagant habits, and how the pension roll then will grow, we know to be incalculable. Moreover, we shall then be in the situation of those European powers, the extent of whose armaments are determined, not by their own wishes, but by the armaments of their rivals. We, too, shall nervously watch reports from abroad telling us that this power is augmenting the number of its warships, or that another is increasing its battalions, or strengthening its colonial garrisons in the neighborhood of our far-away possessions ; and we shall have to follow suit. Not we ourselves, but our rivals and possible enemies will decide how large our armies and navies must be, and how much money we must spend for them. And all that money will have to come out of the pockets of our people, the poor as well as the rich. Our tax-paying capacity and willingness are indeed very great. But set your policy of imperialism in full swing, as the acquisition of the Philippines will do, and the time will come, and come quickly, when every American farmer and workingman, when going to his toil, will, like his European brother, have "to carry a fully armed soldier on his back."

Our government has agreed to appear in the "Peace and Disarmament Conference" called by the Russian czar. What will our representative have to say when the Russian spokesman, as the czar has done, truthfully describes the ever-growing evils of militarism, and the necessity of putting a stop to them in the interest of civilization and of the popular welfare? The American imperialist, whatever fine phrases he may employ, will have to say substantially this: "All you tell us about the ruinous effects of increasing armaments and the necessity of stopping them in the interest of civilization and the popular welfare was our own belief some time ago. But we Americans have recently changed our minds. You, gentlemen, say that the powers you represent would disarm if they could, and that general disarmament might be possible if one

power would resolutely begin to disarm. But we Americans are just beginning to arm. You say that this will put another difficulty in the way of general disarmament. But we Americans have, by way of liberating Cuba, won by conquest some islands in both hemispheres, to which we may wish to add, and this business will require larger armies and navies than we now have."

This is the voice of American imperialism. And thus our great and glorious republic, which once boasted of marching in the vanguard of progressive civilization, will deliberately go to the rear, and make of itself a new obstacle to a reform, the success of which would do infinitely more for the general good of mankind than we could accomplish by a hundred victories of our arms on land or sea.

It would seem, therefore, that the new territorial acquisitions in view are after all very different from those we have made before. But something more is to be said. When the Cuban affair approached a crisis, President McKinley declared in his message that "forcible annexation cannot be thought of" for "it would, by our code of morals, be criminal aggression." And in resolving upon the war against Spain, Congress, to commend that war to the public opinion of mankind, declared with equal emphasis and solemnity that the war was, from a sense of duty and humanity, made specifically for the liberation of Cuba, and that Cuba "is, and of right ought to be, free and independent." If these declarations were not sincere, they were base and disgraceful acts of hypocrisy. If they were sincere at the time, would they not be turned into such disgraceful acts of hypocrisy by subsequently changing the war, professedly made from motives of duty and humanity, into a war of conquest and self-aggrandizement? It is pretended that these virtuous promises referred to Cuba only. But if President McKinley had said that, while the forcible annexation of Cuba would be criminal aggression, the forcible annexation of anything else would be perfectly right, and if Congress had declared

that as to Cuba the war would be one of mere duty, humanity, and liberation, but that we would take by conquest whatever else we could lay our hands on, would not all mankind have broken out in a shout of scornful derision !

I ask in all candor, taking President McKinley at his word: Will the forcible annexation of the Philippines by our code of morals not be criminal aggression—a self-confessed crime? I ask further, if the Cubans, as Congress declared, are *and of right ought to be* free and independent, can anybody tell me why the Porto Ricans and the Filipinos ought not *of right* to be free and independent? Can you sincerely recognize the right to freedom and independence of one and refuse the same right to another in the same situation, and then take his land? Would not that be double-dealing of the most shameless sort?

We hear much of the respect of mankind for us having been greatly raised by our victories. Indeed, the valor of our soldiers and the brilliant achievements of our navy have won deserved admiration. But do not deceive yourselves about the respect of mankind. Recently I found in the papers an account of the public opinion of Europe, written by a prominent English journalist. This is what he says: "The friends of America wring their hands in unaffected grief over the fall of the United States under the temptation of the lust of territorial expansion. Her enemies shoot out the lip and shriek in derision over what they regard as the unmistakable demonstration which the demand for the Philippines affords of American cupidity, American bad faith and American ambition. 'We told you so,' they exclaim. That is what the unctuous rectitude of the Anglo-Saxon always ends in. He always begins by calling heaven to witness his unselfish desire to help his neighbor, but he always ends by stealing his spoons!"

Atrocious, is it not? And yet this is substantially what the true friends of America, and what her enemies in Europe, think—I mean those friends who had faith in the nobility of the American people, who loved our

republican government, and who hoped that the example set by our great democracy, would be an inspiration to those struggling for liberty the world over; and I mean those enemies who hate republican government and who long to see the American people disgraced and humiliated. So they think: I know it from my own correspondence. Nothing has in our times discredited the name of republic in the civilized world as much as the Dreyfus outrage in France and our conquest furor in America; and our conquest furor more, because from us the world hoped more.

No, do not deceive yourselves. If we turn that war which was so solemnly commended to the favor of mankind as a generous war of liberation and humanity into a victory for conquest and self-aggrandizement, we shall have thoroughly forfeited our moral credit with the world. Professions of unselfish virtue and benevolence, proclamations of noble humanitarian purposes coming from us will never, never be trusted again. Is this the position in which this great republic of ours should stand among the family of nations? Our American self-respect should rise in indignant protest against it.

And now compare this picture of the state of things which threatens us, with the picture I drew of our condition existing before the expansion fever seized us. Which will you choose?

What can there be to justify a change of policy fraught with such direful consequences? Let us pass the arguments of the advocates of such imperialism candidly in review.

The cry suddenly raised that this great country has become too small for us is too ridiculous to demand an answer, in view of the fact that our present population may be tripled and still have ample elbow-room, with resources to support many more. But we are told that our industries are gasping for breath; that we are suffering from over-production; that our products must have new outlets, and that we need colonies and dependencies the world over to give us more markets.

More markets? Certainly. But do we, civilized beings, indulge in the absurd and barbarous notion that we must own the countries with which we wish to trade? Here are our official reports before us, telling us that of late years our export trade has grown enormously, not only of farm products, but of the products of our manufacturing industries; in fact, that "our sales of manufactured goods have continued to extend with a facility and promptitude of results which have excited the serious concern of countries that, for generations, had not only controlled their home markets, but had practically monopolized certain lines of trade in other lands."

There is a distinguished Englishman, the Right Hon. Charles T. Ritchie, President of the Board of Trade, telling a British Chamber of Commerce that "we (Great Britain) are being rapidly overhauled in exports by other nations, especially the United States and Germany," their exports fast advancing, while British exports are declining. What? Great Britain, the greatest colonial power in the world, losing in competition with two nations one of which had, so far, no colonies or dependencies at all, and the other none of any commercial importance? What does this mean? It means that, as proved by the United States and Germany, colonies are not necessary for the expansion of trade, and that, as proved by Great Britain, colonies do not protect a nation against a loss of trade. Our trade expands, without colonies or big navies, because we produce certain goods better and in proportion cheaper than other people do. British trade declines, in spite of immense dependencies and the strongest navy, because it does not successfully compete with us in that respect. Trade follows, not the flag, but the best goods for the price. Expansion of export trade and new markets! We do not need foreign conquests to get them, for we have them, and are getting them more and more in rapidly increasing growth.

"But the Pacific Ocean," we are mysteriously told, "will be the great commercial battlefield of the future, and we must quickly use the present opportunity to

secure our position on it. The visible presence of great power is necessary for us to get our share of the trade of China. Therefore, we must have the Philippines." Well, the China trade is worth having, although for a time out of sight the Atlantic Ocean will be an infinitely more important battlefield of commerce than the Pacific, and one European customer is worth more than twenty or thirty Asiatics. But does the trade of China really require that we should have the Philippines and make a great display of power to get our share? Read the consular reports, and you will find that in many places in China our trade is rapidly gaining, while in some British trade is declining, and this while Great Britain had on hand the greatest display of power imaginable and we had none. And in order to increase our trade there, our consuls advise us to improve our commercial methods, saying nothing of the necessity of establishing a base of naval operations, and of our appearing there with war ships and heavy guns. Trade is developed, not by the best guns, but by the best merchants. But why do other nations prepare to fight for the Chinese trade? Other nations have done many foolish things which we have been, and I hope will remain, wise enough not to imitate. If it should come to fighting for Chinese customers, the powers engaged in that fight are not unlikely to find out that they pay too high a price for what can be gained, and that at last the peaceful and active NEUTRAL will have the best bargain. At any rate, to launch into all the embroilments of an imperialistic policy by annexing the Philippines in order to snatch something more of the Chinese trade would be for us the foolishbest game of all.

Generally speaking, nothing could be more irrational than all the talk about our losing commercial or other opportunities which "will never come back if we fail to grasp them now." Why, we are so rapidly growing in all the elements of power ahead of all other nations that, not many decades hence, unless we demoralize ourselves by a reckless policy of adventure, not one of them will be able to resist our will if we choose to enforce it.

This the world knows, and is alarmed at the prospect. Those who are most alarmed may wish that we should give them now, by some rash enterprise, an occasion for dealing us a damaging blow while we are less irresistible.

"But we must have coaling stations for our navy!"

Well, can we not get as many coaling stations as we need without owning populous countries behind them that would entangle us in dangerous political responsibilities and complications? Must Great Britain own the whole of Spain in order to hold Gibraltar?

"But we must civilize those poor people!" Are we not ingenious and charitable enough to do much for their civilization without subjugating and ruling them by criminal aggression?

The rest of the pleas for imperialism consist mostly of those high-sounding catch-words of which a free people when about to decide a great question should be especially suspicious. We are admonished that it is time for us to become a "world power." Well, we *are* a world power now, and have been for many years. What is a world power? A power strong enough to make its voice listened to with deference by the world whenever it chooses to speak. Is it necessary for a world power, in order to be such, to have its finger in every pie? Must we have the Philippines in order to become a world power? To ask the question is to answer it.

The American flag, we are told, whenever once raised, must never be hauled down. Certainly, every patriotic citizen will always be ready, if need be, to fight and to die under his flag wherever it may wave in justice and for the best interests of the country. But I say to you, woe to the republic if it should ever be without citizens patriotic and brave enough to defy the demagogues' cry and to haul down the flag wherever it may be raised not in justice and not for the best interests of the country. Such a republic would not last long.

But, they tell us, we have been living in a state of contemptible isolation which must be broken so that we may feel and conduct ourselves "as a full-grown mem-

ber of the family of nations." What is that so-called isolation? Is it commercial? Last year our foreign trade amounted to nearly 2000 million dollars, and is rapidly growing. Is that commercial isolation? Or are we politically isolated? Remember our history. Who was it that early in this century broke up the piracy of the Barbary States? Who was it that took a leading part in delivering the world's commerce of the Danish Sound dues? Who was it that first opened Japan to communication with the western world? And what power has in this century made more valuable contributions to international law than the United States? Do you call that contemptible isolation? It is true, we did not meddle much with foreign affairs that did not concern us. But if the circle of our interests widens and we wish to meddle more, must we needs have the Philippines in order to feel and conduct ourselves as a member of the family of nations?

We are told that, having grown so great and strong, we must at last cast off our childish reverence for the teachings of Washington's farewell address — those "nursery rhymes that were sung around the cradle of the republic." I apprehend that many of those who now so flippantly scoff at the heritage the Father of his Country left us in his last words of admonition, have never read that venerable document. I challenge those who have, to show me a single sentence of general import in it that would not as a wise rule of national conduct apply to the circumstances of to-day! What is it that has given to Washington's farewell address an authority that was revered by all until our recent victories made so many of us drunk with wild ambitions? Not only the prestige of Washington's name, great as that was and should ever remain. No, it was the fact that under a respectful observance of those teachings this republic has grown from the most modest beginnings into a Union spanning this vast continent; our people have multiplied from a handful to 75 millions; we have risen from poverty to a wealth the sum of which the imagination can hardly grasp; this American

nation has become one of the greatest and most powerful on earth, and, continuing in the same course, will surely become the greatest and most powerful of all. Not Washington's name alone gave his teachings their dignity and weight. It was the practical results of his policy that secured to it, until now, the intelligent approbation of the American people. And unless we have completely lost our senses, we shall never despise and reject as mere "nursery rhymes" the words of wisdom left us by the greatest of Americans, following which the American people have achieved a splendor of development without parallel in the history of mankind.

You may tell me that this is all very well, but that by the acts of our own government we are now in this annexation business, and how can we get decently out of it? I answer that the difficulties of getting out of it may be great; but that they are infinitely less great than the difficulties we shall have to contend with if we stay in it.

Looking them in the face, let us first clear our minds of confused notions about our duties and responsibilities in the premises. That our victories have devolved upon us certain duties as to the people of the conquered islands, I readily admit. But are they the only duties we have to perform, or have they suddenly become paramount to all other duties? I deny it. I deny that the duties we owe to the Cubans and the Porto Ricans and the Filipinos and the Tagals of the Asiatic islands absolve us from our duties to the 75 millions of our own people and to their posterity. I deny that they oblige us to destroy the moral credit of our own republic by turning this loudly heralded war of liberation and humanity into a land-grabbing game and an act of criminal aggression. I deny that they compel us to aggravate our race troubles, to bring upon us the constant danger of war, and to subject our people to the galling burden of increasing armaments. If we have rescued those unfortunate daughters of Spain, the colonies, from the tyranny of their cruel father, I deny that we are therefore in honor bound to marry any of the girls,

or to take them all into our household, where they may disturb and demoralize our whole family. I deny that the liberation of those Spanish dependencies morally constrains us to do anything that would put our highest mission to solve the great problem of democratic government in jeopardy, or that would otherwise endanger the vital interests of the republic. Whatever our duties to them may be, our duties to our own country and people stand first; and from this standpoint we have, as sane men and patriotic citizens, to regard our obligation to take care of the future of those islands and their people.

They fought for deliverance from Spanish oppression, and we helped them to obtain that deliverance. That deliverance they understood to mean independence. I repeat the question whether anybody can tell me why the declaration of Congress that the Cubans *of right ought to be* free and independent should not apply to all of them? Their independence, therefore, would be the natural and rightful outcome. This is the solution of the problem first to be taken in view.

It is objected that they are not capable of independent government. They may answer that this is their affair and that they are at least entitled to a trial. I frankly admit that if they are given that trial, their conduct in governing themselves will be far from perfect. Well, the conduct of no people is perfect, not even our own. They may try to revenge themselves upon their tories in their Revolutionary War. But we, too, threw our tories into hideous dungeons during our Revolutionary War and persecuted and drove them away after its close. They may have bloody civil broils. But we, too, have had our Civil War which cost hundreds and thousands of lives and devastated one-half of our land; and now we have in horrible abundance the killings by lynch law, and our battles at Virden. They may have troubles with their wild tribes. So had we, and we treated our wild tribes in a manner not to be proud of. They may have corruption and rapacity in their government, but Havana and Ponce may get municipal administration almost as good as New York

has under German rule; and Manila may secure a city council not much less virtuous than that of Chicago.

I say these things not in a spirit of irony, well understanding the difference; but I say them seriously to remind you that, when we speak of the government those islands should have, we cannot reasonably set up standards which are not reached even by the most civilized people, and which in those regions could not be reached, even if we ourselves conducted their government with our best available statesmanship. Our attention is in these days frequently called to the admirable and in many respects successful administrative machinery introduced by Great Britain in India. But it must not be forgotten that this machinery was evolved from a century of rapine, corruption, disastrous blunders, savage struggles, and murderous revolts, and that even now many wise men in England gravely doubt in their hearts whether it was best for their country to undertake the conquest of India at all, and are troubled by gloomy forebodings of a calamitous catastrophe that may some day engulf that splendid fabric of Asiatic dominion.

No, we cannot expect that the Porto Ricans, the Cubans, and the Filipinos will maintain orderly governments in Anglo-Saxon fashion. But they may succeed in establishing a tolerable order of things in their own fashion, as Mexico, after many decades of turbulent disorder, succeeded at last, under Porfirio Diaz, in having a strong and orderly government of her kind, not, indeed, such a government as we would tolerate in this Union, but a government answering Mexican character and interests, and respectable in its relations with the outside world.

This will become all the more possible if, without annexing and ruling those people, we simply put them on their feet, and then give them the benefit of that humanitarian spirit which, as we claim, led us into the war for the liberation of Cuba. To this end we should keep our troops on the islands only until their people have constructed governments and organized forces of their

own for the maintenance of order. Our military occupation should not be kept up as long as possible, but should be withdrawn as soon as possible.

The Philippines may, as Belgium and Switzerland are in Europe, be covered by a guarantee of neutrality on the part of the powers most interested in that region—an agreement which the diplomacy of the United States should not find it difficult to obtain. This would secure them against foreign aggression. As to the independent republics of Porto Rico and Cuba, our government might lend its good offices to unite them with San Domingo and Hayti in a confederacy of the Antilles, to give them a more respectable international standing. Stipulations should be agreed upon with them as to open ports and the freedom of business enterprise within their borders, affording all possible commercial facilities. Missionary effort in the largest sense, as to the development of popular education and of other civilizing agencies, as well as abundant charity in case of need, will on our part not be wanting, and all this will help to mitigate their disorderly tendencies and to steady their governments.

Thus we shall be their best friends without being their foreign rulers. We shall have done our duty to them, to ourselves, and to the world. However imperfect their governments may still remain, they will at least be their own, and they will not with their disorders and corruptions contaminate our institutions, the integrity of which is not only to ourselves, but to liberty-loving mankind, the most important concern of all. We may then await the result with generous patience—with the same patience with which for many years we witnessed the revolutionary disorders of Mexico on our very borders, without any thought of taking her government into our own hands.

Ask yourselves whether a policy like this will not raise the American people to a level of moral greatness never before attained! If this democracy, after all the intoxication of triumph in war, conscientiously remembers its professions and pledges, and soberly reflects

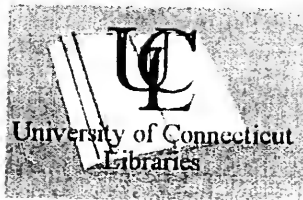
on its duties to itself and others, and then deliberately resists the temptation of conquest, it will achieve the grandest triumph of the democratic idea that history knows of. It will give the government of, for, and by the people a prestige it never before possessed. It will render the cause of civilization throughout the world a service without parallel. It will put its detractors to shame, and its voice will be heard in the council of nations with more sincere respect and more deference than ever. The American people, having given proof of their strength and also of their honesty and wisdom, will stand infinitely mightier before the world than any number of subjugated vassals could make them. Are not here our best interests, both moral and material? Is not this genuine glory? Is not this true patriotism?

I call upon all who so believe never to lose heart in the struggle for this great cause, whatever odds may seem to be against us. Let there be no pusillanimous yielding while the final decision is still in the balance. Let us relax no effort in this, the greatest crisis the republic has ever seen. Let us never cease to invoke the good sense, the honesty, and the patriotic pride of the people. Let us raise high the flag of our country—not as an emblem of reckless adventure and greedy conquest, of betrayed professions and broken pledges, of criminal aggressions and arbitrary rule over subject populations—but the old, the true flag, the flag of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, the flag of the government of, for, and by the people; the flag of national faith held sacred and of national honor unsullied; the flag of human rights and of good example to all nations; the flag of true civilization, peace, and goodwill to all men. Under it let us stand to the last, whatever betide.

THIS IS A PHOTOCOPY REPRODUCTION

It is made in compliance with copyright law
and produced on acid-free archival
book weight paper
which meets the requirements of
ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992
Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials

Preservation photocopying
by
The University of Connecticut Libraries
Preservation Department
2001





University of
Connecticut
Libraries



39153027628926

